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ABSTRACT

This study describes current, widely varied state practices in the licensure of school administrators and identifies salient policy issues with attention to recommendations for best professional practice, including those in reports issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. The results of a biennial survey of 50 states and the District of Columbia conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) State Issues Clearinghouse are reported, focusing on policy issues emerging from composite state licensure requirements. Common points of comparison were selected, with analysis based on the license most commonly in use at the school principal and superintendent levels. Results suggest the following recommendations: provision for collaboration among groups with vested interests in the quality of school administrators; development of a national examination and exploration of national certification; state licensing boards that would cooperate with a national policy board and national accrediting agencies; coordination of professional development opportunities; and establishment of advisory groups to graduate programs in educational administration. (LL)

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The Licensure of School Administrators: Policy and Practice

AN ISSUE PAPER BY:

CARL R. ASHBAUGH
KATHERINE L. KASTEN

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JUNE 1992

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INTRODUCTION

> Current licensure procedures do a great disservice because they propose to designate individuals particularly suited by character, intelligence, and skill to administer schools; but that claim is indefensible (*National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration*, 1988, 21).

Policies related to licensure of school administrators have a number of purposes. The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1988), cited above, noted a disparity between what licensure procedures appear to do and what they actually accomplish. By establishing standards for the licensure of professionals seeking to practice in a variety of professions, states exercise a crucial function. Consumers are protected from harm by unscrupulous, poorly prepared, or incompetent practitioners.

Given these purposes, states might use one or more policy instruments such as mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system-changing (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). For example, state control over preservice training and certification is generally exercised in a set of mandates that detail the requirements for licensure. Performance accountability systems, such as merit pay systems and evaluation and supervision procedures, might be implemented as mandates or inducements. Professional development involves capacity building. State efforts to change teacher role definitions in initiatives such as career ladders and mentor teacher programs are system-changing mechanisms.

During the 1980s, states focused much of their efforts on measures to enhance the preservice training and licensure for teachers and administrators—mandates in the area of personnel training. In a mid-1980s national survey, 46 percent of the responding state certification officers indicated that state licensure requirements for school administrators had been revised at least once and 62 percent reported that some type of revision was under consideration (Gousha, LoPresti, & Jones, 1988).

States have used the modification of licensure specifications as a primary instrument for ensuring the quality of educators who practice within the state. They have also taken more control relative to institutions of higher education and school districts in detailing the policies to receive and maintain some form of educational licensure.

In an analysis of policy issues in teacher education, Mary M. Kennedy (1991) noted three problems related to teacher quality: the problem of representation, constructing a teaching force that represents the diversity

of the students being served; the problem of ability, ensuring that teachers have a certain level of intellectual ability; and the problem of improved practice, ensuring that professionals are capable in the classroom. Kennedy argued that policies designed to address one problem may or may not be relevant to addressing another. Policymakers often assume, for example, that problems related to performance can be solved by policies related to selection. Similar confusions are evident in the licensure of school administrators.

The purposes of this study were twofold: to describe current, widely varied state practices in the licensure of school administrators; and to identify salient policy issues with attention to recommendations for best professional practice, including those in reports issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1988) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989, 1990).

METHODOLOGY

Our primary source of data was the report *Teacher Education Policy in the States* (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, December 1990). This document reports the results of a biannual survey conducted by the AACTE State Issues Clearinghouse, established to monitor and analyze state reform and supported by AACTE and the Ford Foundation. In 1990, a section on administrator licensure was included in the survey for the first time. Data described in this section of the survey were generated in response to a rather general question posed to representatives of state agencies. Data were available for 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Limitations in the data constrained our analysis. Because specific questions were not asked and discrete categories were not used for reporting responses, responses were given based on the respondent's personal understanding of the questioner's interests and intents. Comparisons using the data are thus problematic. Absence of information about a specific state's requirements, for example, does not mean that the state does not have requirements in that area. In analyzing the data, we sought to identify patterns of responses. Thus, while we cannot speak with absolute assurance about the requirements within a specific state, our generalizations about the 51 reporting units are reasonably accurate. Moreover, our major concern was with those policy issues emerging from composite state licensure requirements, not with the exact requirements of a particular state. Readers interested in a more detailed treatment of requirements for administrative licensure in specific states are encouraged to consult the publications of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC).

To compare the requirements of the reporting units, we selected common points of comparison—for example, entry-level requirements, minimum requirements, or maximum requirements. We know that, in most states, a local district has the option to require that its principals meet more than minimum licensure requirements. Alaska, for example, has a principal's license, but state standards indicate that principals are only required to hold a teaching license. The data do not indicate the type of license required for principals in most Alaskan districts. Our analysis may not, then, always reflect the modal requirements in effect in a given state.

States vary in the kinds of licenses they require. A few states require specific licenses for a broad array of administrative positions. Michigan, for example, has specific licenses for elementary and secondary administrators,

superintendents, central administrators, and chief school business officials. Administrative credentials available in Indiana include director of reading, director of school services, director of vocational education programs, and director of special education programs. By contrast, Alabama now requires a single, generic administrator certificate that covers all school administrative positions. Most states prescribe licensure requirements to cover two general classifications—building-level or district-level positions. We chose to focus our analysis on the license most commonly in use at each of these levels: the school principal and the superintendent. We analyzed the data available by comparing licensure requirements for these two administrative levels across a number of dimensions.

LICENSURE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Forty-one of the 51 reporting units require some type of licensure specifically for the principalship. Of the 10 states not requiring a specific principal's license, nine require generic administrative licensure. In the 10th state, Alaska, principal licensure is discretionary. Within the group of 41 reporting units that require a principal's license, 15 stipulate a principalship endorsement in addition to a generic administrative license. The remaining 26 states have a specific license designated for the principalship, rather than an endorsement on a generic administrative license. Another distinction within the 41 reporting units is that 26 designate a level for the principal license, usually elementary or secondary. The other 15 have a general license for principals or a general principal endorsement that permits the holder to administer at all grade levels.

For individuals to qualify for the initial license, most states require a master's degree (n=36) or a master's degree plus additional graduate credit hours (n=3). In 10 other states, some graduate credit is required, and one state requires no graduate credit (Alaska). Although most states do not stipulate an academic major for the master's degree, many states (n=30) require that holders of the license complete a specified number of graduate credit hours in the field of educational administration or some other coursework related to the desired license.

Due to uneven reporting, we can only offer the most tentative descriptions about the extent to which states specify the content of graduate studies required of those seeking to qualify for a principal's license. In 23 of the reporting units, the state specifies the content of graduate studies. For 10 of the units, descriptions of the required content areas for graduate study were available. Twelve additional states reported using program approval as the means through which they will agree to license applicants recommended to them from an institution of higher education. Although we cannot be certain of the degree to which these states dictate the content of administrator preparation programs, we can infer that some level of state control is present.

In the 10 reporting units for which some information was available about the content of academic preparation required for the initial license, 22 different content areas were identified. Only three content areas

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(administration and leadership, curriculum, and supervision of instruction) were requirements in at least five states. Three other areas (personnel, law, and education of special populations) were listed as areas of content in at least three states. Other areas of content were required in one or two states. This situation suggests that the states do not agree on the appropriate knowledge base for the principalship.

One-third of the reporting units (n=17) require a clinical component as part of initial licensure. States use a variety of terms to describe this clinical component: internship, field experience, practicum, and clinical experience. We are unsure from the data whether these experiences are operationally different, as the use of different terms or descriptors would imply. In several states, on-the-job experience can be used to satisfy the internship requirement. In other states, the completion of a clinical or field experience is apparently required as part of a university-based preparation program.

The majority of reporting units require teaching experience as a prerequisite to licensure. Of the 45 states that require teaching experience, 15 stipulate that the experience must be gained at the level of the license sought. Twenty percent of the states permit substitution of some other professional experience to satisfy the teaching requirement.

To secure principalship licensure, some states require that candidates take an examination. Twenty percent of all reporting units require that candidates for licensure pass the specialty area test of the National Teachers Examination. Four states have developed their own examinations for applicants for a principal's license.

States have established terms of validity for their licenses. In four states, the initial license is permanent. Forty states grant an initial license for some limited term and then require the holder to either renew or upgrade within a specified period of time. In five of these states, upgrading the license will ultimately lead to permanent licensure. In 14 other states, upgrading results in a term license. Altogether, 41 states do not offer permanent licensure and license holders are required to renew their licenses through a process that typically includes some combination of professional experience, graduate study, performance assessment, and professional development. The requirements for upgrade and renewal are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Requirements for Principals to Upgrade or Renew Licenses

Requirement	To Upgrade Licenses (states)	To Renew Licenses (states)*
Graduate study	6	5
Position experience	7	7
Graduate study and experience	6	5
Graduate study or experience	—	2
Graduate study or professional development	—	7
Experience or professional development	—	2
Professional development	—	10
No requirements specified	—	4
TOTAL STATES	19	42

*Although Pennsylvania grants permanent licensure, holders are required to take six hours of graduate credit every five years. Pennsylvania's requirements are included here.

In those states that offer differing grades of licensure, graduate study at an institution of higher education and professional experience are the exclusive requirements for upgrading a principalship license. This means that the mechanisms for upgrading licenses, although specified by the states, rest with postsecondary institutions and school districts. States might control the nature of these academic and professional experiences by defining required areas of graduate study and mandating specific professional experiences; for example, six states require those who upgrade a license to successfully complete beginning administrator programs or performance assessments, and in at least three states, the content of coursework is specified.

In contrast, states sanction a wider array of options for license renewal. Professional development and professional experience are more frequently required than graduate study. States apparently exercise less control over the professional experience required to renew a license than they do for upgrading a license. That is, states may specify a number of years of experience required for renewal but typically do not specify the content of that experience. In 19 states, professional development is either a requirement or an option for license renewal. Although the data are unclear, we assume that a variety of groups might be the providers and definers of professional development opportunities: professional associations, state departments of education, local school districts, regional or intermediate educational agencies, and institutions of higher education. The state's role

in approving these professional development experiences is not clear, even though we assume that, in every case, the state education agency exercises final approval of an applicant's request for license renewal.

In summary, 41 of the 51 reporting units require some type of licensure for the principalship, with 26 states designating the level—usually elementary and secondary administration. To qualify for the initial license, individuals in most states are required to have a master's degree or a master's degree plus additional graduate credit hours. One-third of the reporting units require a clinical component for the initial licensure. The majority of the reporting units require teaching experience as a prerequisite to licensure, often stipulating that the experience must be at the level of the license sought. Twenty percent of all reporting units require that candidates pass the specialty area test of the National Teachers Examination. Four states have developed their own examinations for applicants for a principal's license. In four states, the initial license is permanent; 40 states grant an initial license for some limited term and then require the holder to either renew or upgrade within a specified period of time. Requirements for upgrade vary, but, in general, graduate study in institutions of higher education and professional experience are required. License renewal more frequently involves professional development and professional experience than graduate study. Licensure requirements for the principalship are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Summary of State Requirements for Principals[1]

	Specific Principal License	School Level Specified	Master's or Higher Degree Required	Clinical Component Required	Examination Required	Teaching Experience Required	License Renewal Required
Alabama				X		X	X
Alaska							X
Arizona	X	X	X	X		X	X
Arkansas	X	X	X		X	X	X
California						X	X[3]
Colorado	X	X				X	X
Connecticut	X		X			X	X
Delaware	X	X	X			X	X
District of Columbia			X			X	X
Florida	X		X		X[2]	X	X
Georgia			X	X		X	X
Hawaii	X					X	
Idaho	X	X	X	X		X	X
Illinois	X		X	X		X	X
Indiana	X	X				X	X
Iowa	X	X	X			X	X
Kansas	X	X	X			X	X
Kentucky	X	X	X	X		X	X
Louisiana	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Maine	X		X	X		X	X
Maryland	X		X			X	X
Massachusetts	X	X		X		X	
Michigan	X	X	X			X	X
Minnesota	X	X	X	X		X	X
Mississippi	X		X		X	X	X
Missouri	X	X	X	X		X	X
Montana	X	X	X			X	X
Nebraska	X	X	X				X
Nevada			X			X	X
New Hampshire	X		X			X	X
New Jersey	X		X		X		X[3]
New Mexico			X	X	X	X	X
New York				X		X	X[3]
N. Carolina	X		X		X		X
N. Dakota	X	X				X	X
Ohio	X	X	X		X	X	X[3]
Oklahoma	X	X	X	X	X[2]	X	X
Oregon	X		X		X		X
Pennsylvania	X	X				X	X
Rhode Island	X	X	X		X	X	X[3]
S. Carolina	X	X	X		X	X	X
S. Dakota	X	X	X			X	X
Tennessee			X			X	X
Texas	X		X	X	X[2]	X	
Utah			X	X			X
Vermont	X					X	X
Virginia	X	X	X			X	X
Washington	X	X		X		X	X
W. Virginia	X	X	X		X[2]	X	X
Wisconsin	X	X				X	X
Wyoming	X		X			X	X

[1] Inclusion of a state in a column indicates that the state has this requirement for licensure. The number of times a state is listed in the table provides a rough estimate of the degree of regulation in the state.

[2] State examination

[3] Permanent license available

LICENSURE FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

Of the 51 reporting units, 39 require a license specifically for the superintendent—either a superintendent's license (n=23) or a superintendent's endorsement on a general administrative license (n=16). (Although Pennsylvania commissions rather than licenses school superintendents, the state is included here in the analysis of prerequisites for holding office.) Of the 12 states not requiring a superintendent's license, eight states offer a general administrative license and four states require no specific license for the superintendent.

For an individual to qualify for the initial superintendent's license, most states require a master's degree (n=26) or work beyond the master's degree (n=11). In eight other states, some graduate study is required. Two states require only the bachelor's degree.

For 12 reporting units, some information was available about the content of academic preparation required for the initial license. Of the 26 different content areas described as part of licensure requirements, only three (curriculum, personnel, and business management) were requirements in at least five states. Four other areas (foundations of education, administration, policy studies, and supervision of instruction) were listed as areas of content in three states. Other areas of content were required in one or two states. This situation suggests that the states do not define a common knowledge base for the superintendency.

States differ more in the experience requirements for the initial license than they do in the academic preparation required. Of the 47 states that require a superintendent's license or a generic administrative license, three have no experience requirements. Of the 44 states that require some previous experience, 18 require both teaching and administrative experience, 17 require teaching experience only, three require administrative experience only, four require teaching or administrative experience, and two require teaching or other comparable experience. Fewer states require a practicum or clinical experience prior to receipt of the superintendent's license (n=11) than the principal's license (n=17).

As with the principal's license, some states require passing an examination as part of the licensure process for the superintendency. With the exception of two states in which an examination is required for principals' licensure but not for superintendents' licensure, states that require an ex-

amination for the principal license also require the same examination for the superintendency.

States generally require some combination of education, professional development, and experience to upgrade and renew the superintendent's license. Only six states offer a permanent superintendent's license. In two of these states, the permanent certificate is the initial certificate. In four other states, superintendents must upgrade their licenses before receiving a permanent license. In the 41 remaining states, the initial license and the highest-level license available for the superintendency have a specified validity period. The validity period ranges from one year to 10 years, with the modal state having a validity period of five years. The requirements to upgrade and renew superintendent licenses are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Requirements for Superintendents to Upgrade or Renew Licenses

Requirement	To Upgrade Licenses (states)	To Renew Licenses (states)
Graduate study	4	10
Position experience	4	8
Graduate study and experience	4	3
Graduate study or experience	—	3
Graduate study or professional development	—	4
Experience or professional development	1	1
Professional development	—	6
No requirements specified	—	5
TOTAL STATES	13	40

As with the principalship, upgrading the superintendent's license is done primarily through graduate study and experience. The only exception is one state that permits the license holder to substitute professional development credit for experience. Again, postsecondary institutions and school districts play primary roles in upgrading licenses.

States have more varied requirements for renewal of the superintendent's license. Graduate study and position experience are still, however, the primary modes of license renewal.

In summary, 39 states require a license for the superintendency. Most of these require a master's degree or additional graduate study beyond the master's degree. Experience requirements for a superintendent's license

are more extensive than those for a principal's license. Approximately one-half of the states that have a superintendent's license require both teaching and administrative experience. Examination requirements parallel those of the principalship. In most states, both the initial and the highest levels of superintendency licensure have a specified validity period. As with the principalship, movement from the initial to the highest level of licensure is achieved through graduate study and experience. Position experience, graduate study, and professional development are the means for license renewal established by most states. Licensure requirements for the superintendency are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4: Summary of State Requirements for Superintendents[1]

	Specific Superintendent License	Master's or Higher Degree Required	Clinical Component Required	Examination Required	Teaching and Admin Experience Required	License Renewal Required
Alabama		X				X
Alaska	X				X	X
Arizona	X	X	X			X
Arkansas		X		X		X
California						
Colorado	X					X
Connecticut	X	X			X	X
Delaware	X	X	X		X	X
District of Columbia		X				X
Florida						
Georgia		X	X			X
Hawaii						
Idaho	X	X				X
Illinois	X	X			X	X
Indiana	X	X			X	X
Iowa	X	X				X
Kansas	X	X				X
Kentucky	X	X			X	X
Louisiana	X	X			X	X
Maine	X	X	X		X	X
Maryland	X	X			X	X
Massachusetts	X		X			
Michigan	X					X
Minnesota	X	X	X			X
Mississippi						
Missouri	X					X
Montana	X	X				X
Nebraska	X	X				X
Nevada		X				X
New Hampshire	X	X				X
New Jersey	X	X		X	X	X[3]
New Mexico		X	X	X		X
New York		X	X			X[3]
N. Carolina	X	X		X		X
N. Dakota	X	X			X	X
Ohio	X			X[2]	X	X[3]
Oklahoma	X			X[2]	X	X
Oregon	X	X	X	X		X
Pennsylvania	X	X			X	X
Rhode Island	X	X		X	X	X[3]
S. Carolina	X	X		X	X	X
S. Dakota	X	X			X	X
Tennessee	X	X				X
Texas	X	X	X	X[2]		
Utah		X				X
Vermont	X		X		X	X
Virginia	X	X				X
Washington	X	X				X
W. Virginia	X	X				X
Wisconsin	X					X
Wyoming	X	X				X

[1] Inclusion of a state in a column indicates that the state has this requirement for licensure. The number of times a state is listed provides a rough estimate of the degree of regulation in the state. Data was not available for all states.

[2] State examination

[3] Permanent license available

Extent of Licensure Regulation

Highly regulatory states exhibit most of the following characteristics:

- Licenses are limited to specific levels of schooling.
- Several grades of licenses are used.
- Licensure is granted for a term, not on a permanent basis.
- Teaching experience is prerequisite, sometimes at the specific level of licensure.
- A master's or higher graduate degree is required for entry.
- The preparation program must include a practicum or internship.
- The academic content of the preparation program is state-specified.
- A state or national exam is required prior to initial licensure.

The extent to which these points are not evident in state licensure provisions may be used to characterize that state as comparatively unregulated. Rough comparisons of the degree of regulation are given in Tables 2 and 4. States that more strictly regulate licensure are listed in several categories in each table. Those that regulate less appear less in the tables.

Four states were selected to represent the extremes of state administrative licensure regulation: Louisiana and Minnesota (comparatively high regulation), and Alaska and Alabama (comparatively low regulation).

Louisiana

Louisiana has separate licenses for elementary and secondary principals. Licensure requires a teaching credential with five years of teaching experience; a master's degree including 30 semester hours in educational administration; and a score of 620 on the administration section of the National Teachers Examination. Initial licensure is provisional, with regular licensure obtained after a two-year internship as either a principal or assistant principal. The regular license must be renewed every five years and requires successful on-the-job performance evaluations. To secure a Louisiana superintendent's endorsement, individuals must earn a master's

degree with 48 hours of graduate work in educational administration and six hours in another field. They also must have five years each of teaching experience and successful school administrative experience. The initial endorsement is valid for two years; the continuing endorsement is valid for five years and renewable with successful performance evaluations.

Minnesota

Minnesota, like Louisiana, requires separate licenses for elementary and secondary principals and offers two grades of license: initial and continuing. Initial licensure for the principalship requires three years of teaching experience under a teaching license at the same level as administrative licensure; a master's degree and 45 additional credits in the administrative area for which licensure is sought, including 200 clock hours of field experience. The second grade of licensure, continuing, may be obtained after one year of administrative experience. Continuing licenses are valid for five years and may be renewed with 125 clock hours of approved administrative continuing education and 75 hours of individual professional development activity. Requirements for the initial superintendent license parallel those for the initial elementary and secondary principal license. The holder of a principal's license who wishes to quality for superintendent licensure must complete 45 additional graduate credits in the superintendency or obtain a specialist or doctoral degree. Requirements for obtaining the continuing superintendent's license and renewing the license are identical to those for the principal's license.

Alaska

In Alaska, principals are required minimally to hold the state's Type A teaching certificate. To hold a Type B certificate, which is an unleveled principalship license, an individual must have three years of teaching experience and complete an approved administrative program. Both the teaching license and the administrator license are term licenses and must be renewed every five years with six hours of upper-division credit. An Alaska superintendent's endorsement can be obtained with three years of teaching experience, one year of administrative experience, and completion of an approved administrative program. The credential is valid for five years and may be renewed with six hours of upper-division credit.

Alabama

Alabama is a second example of a state with comparatively little regulation. Individuals may obtain a generic administrative credential with a teacher's license, three years of teaching or instructional support experience, 18 semester hours in educational administration, and a 300-hour internship. This license is valid for 10 years and qualifies the holder for any school administrative position in the state.

One might conclude from these descriptions that even the most regulated states lack some of the possible components of regulation and even the least regulated states show certain characteristics of regulation. This is to be expected in licensing procedures that involve 51 different units, each of which responds to a variety of political influences.

Alternative Licensure

Much has been written in recent years about alternative preparation for licensure. The AACTE survey that served as our primary data source included a specific response category to identify the extent to which alternative licensure is available among the reporting units. When asked to describe the types of alternative preparation programs for teachers, 38 states indicated they have some alternate licensure provisions. Four other states indicated that an alternative licensure route was under consideration, while nine indicated that no alternative existed and none was under consideration at the time.

Responses to the same question about administrative licensure yielded quite different results. Only nine states reported established alternative licensure procedures for administrators. Of these, six reported alternative routes for both principals and superintendents (Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon, Texas, and West Virginia). Two states (Arizona and New York) reported alternative licensure only for superintendents, and Hawaii's alternative licensure is only for principals.

We are uncertain about the reason for the disparity between the number of alternative preparation programs for teachers and the number for administrators. One possible explanation is that alternative programs appear in response to a shortage in the number of professionals available for certain positions. This explanation fits particularly well in reporting units that described emergency or temporary licenses as one form of alternative licensure. Hawaii, for example, offers an alternative route because of principal shortages in certain geographic areas. Few states, however, have experienced a shortage of professionals with the credentials for administrative positions (Bliss, 1988).

The most common characteristic of alternative licensure programs for administrators is the substitution of managerial experience in professions for traditional teaching and administrative experience in education. This feature might be better explained by a general dissatisfaction with the type of administrative leadership provided by those who have traveled traditional preparation routes than by shortages of those prepared through traditional routes.

Discussion of The Issues

By and large, alternative programs leading to administrative licensure do not present a radical departure from traditional preparation programs. Licenses received are either limited in scope (e.g., to the requesting school district, as in New York) or are temporary while the holder meets the standard requirements for an administrator license.

Most state constitutions have provisions that make education a legal responsibility of the state. Although responsibility for the day-to-day operation of schools typically is delegated to school district boards of education, a great deal of educational governance is exercised at the state level.

One prime example of state control is the establishment of regulations pertaining to the licensing of school personnel. All states have assumed the function of licensing individuals who are permitted to teach or administer the schools of the state. Because states exercise plenary responsibility for education, control over the licensure of those seeking positions in the public school lies within the legitimate purview of each state. Licensure assures the citizenry that educational professionals are qualified and that the educational interests of students, parents, and the general public are protected. No national credentaling agency should assume this state obligation. *Policy recommendation 1: Licensure should continue to rest with the states because of the compelling state interest in the quality of licensed school administrators. National credentialing should be discretionary and, if developed, used only as evidence that professionals have gone beyond minimum standards for full licensure to proficiency in the field.*

Preparation programs and professional associations, along with representatives of school boards, have a legitimate interest and stake in the licensure of school administrators. State-level decisionmakers should fully recognize the roles of these groups, and should incorporate their representatives into the process of setting standards for administrative licensure.

One way to appropriately empower these relevant constituent groups is through the utilization of administrative licensure boards by each state. Licensure boards could perform functions such as establishing standards, examining candidates, and issuing and revoking licenses. Although these boards would be created by and subject to legislative authority, they would provide a viable means for ensuring that consumer rights and prerogatives were properly safeguarded, as well as enhancing the professionalization of school administration. Licensure boards would also provide state agencies

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with another means to solidify their influence by maintaining a coalition with state educators and related interest groups (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990). *Policy recommendation 2: State licensure boards for school administrators should be established in each state.*

How the states exercise their authority in licensure raises several policy issues. We have grouped the remaining policy recommendations into three areas: the knowledge base for school administration practice, the experiences required for novice and fully licensed professionals, and professional development requirements that are appropriate for school administrators.

THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Four policy issues apply to the educational administration knowledge base:

- generic vs. role-specific administrative licensure;
- state specification of the particular knowledge base;
- the use of examinations to test the knowledge base; and
- the appropriate state role in ensuring that licensed administrators have an adequate knowledge base.

In nine states, administrative licensure is generic rather than role-specific. The administrative license in those states permits the holder to serve in any building- or district-level position. Other states distinguish among the requirements for licensure for various administrative roles. We believe such differentiation is justified, if at all, only on the basis of the particular concerns related to learning, curriculum, and instruction associated with each position. Moreover, we believe that administrators at all levels should be familiar with child development and adult learning theory.

Whether citizens are better served by specific licensure requirements for each of several administrative roles or by generic administrative license requirements is a policy issue that warrants further consideration. *Policy recommendation 3: Simplification of the licensure requirements through a generic license in educational administration is legitimate deregulation and should be seriously considered by states that have a proliferation of licensure requirements.*

Any assertion that we have a well-defined or common knowledge base for the practice of educational administration is problematic. Members of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration were unable to agree on the appropriate content for administration program curricula and dropped the issue (Bradley, 1990). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration and the University Council on Educational Admininstration defined seven broad areas of knowledge and skills:

> societal and cultural influences on schooling, teaching and learning processes sensitive to individual differences, theories of organization and organizational change, methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis, leadership and management processes and functions, policy studies including issues of law, politics, and economic dimensions

of education, moral and ethical dimensions of schooling in a pluralistic society (*Improving the Preparation of School Administrators*, 1989).

Preparation programs, professional associations, national accrediting agencies, and local school boards all have a legitimate interest and stake in the licensure of school administrators, including definitions of the knowledge base. We believe that the knowledge base for educational administration is best defined at a national level through the involvement of relevant constituent groups. Although the definition advanced by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration has been criticized as too broad (Bradley, 1990), this is the kind of national definition we believe is appropriate.

We are confident that a knowledge base can be identified that builds upon the knowledge base for successful teaching. This knowledge base is best learned once professionals have obtained teaching certification and practiced as teachers. *Policy recommendation 4: Licensure in school administration should require a substantial number of graduate credits in educational administration, either as part of or in addition to a master's degree.*

As illustrated in the above analysis, certain states detail the knowledge requirements for the preservice preparation of school administrators. Little commonality is found, however, in the course or subject-matter requirements for licensure. Little support for the specific requirements outlined by some states can be found in the management and administration literature. Moreover, some state specifications on the knowledge base are frequently seen as unreasonable and opposing what academics or practitioners believe can be legitimately supported by the profession's knowledge base (see, for example, Prestine, 1991). Further, these specifications often appear to respond to supply-and-demand cycles in the workplace rather than to requirements that ensure a competent, well-qualified, professional work force. Other states apparently give substantial programmatic discretion to institutions with approved programs for preparing education personnel.

Specificity in the knowledge base required for initial or advanced levels of licensure is particularly problematic. If the knowledge base is set in state policy mandates, it is difficult to change. Moreover, state specifications provide little room for creativity and flexibility in program definition (Goodlad, 1990). If it is not set in policy, decisions about competence are deferred to others. *Policy recommendation 5: Those states that have defined the curriculum for the prelicensing preparation of school administrators should deregulate in this area.*

States that are reluctant to lose control over the curriculum have options other than specifying the curriculum in state policy. In several states, state review of teacher and administrator preparation programs for program approval and review of the programs against national standards of best professional practice have been combined. Four options for integrating state program review and national accreditation have been approved by the

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These options range from separate but concurrent review of the programs by the state agency and an NCATE team (Option One) to state acceptance of the NCATE decision regarding accreditation for purposes of state approval (Option Four). As of November 1990, 18 states had agreements with NCATE to use one of the four options. *Policy recommendation 6: States should coordinate their reviews of preparation programs in educational administration and teacher education with NCATE accreditation.*

Our recommendations about the knowledge base also have implications for testing programs. Educational consumers and state policymakers have demonstrated in the past decade a desire for concrete measures of competence for entry to teaching and administration. If general agreement on the knowledge base cannot be reached, state examinations are likely to be idiosyncratic in their definition of the knowledge base and unable to sustain legal challenges to their validity. If some general agreement on the knowledge base can be reached, test development at the state level would be unnecessarily expensive and involve inappropriate duplication of effort. Instead, state boards of licensure should cooperate on the development of a common testing program. Expectations for this examination should be modest. All that such examinations can accomplish is the verification that applicants for a license have a certain minimum level of knowledge that will of necessity be a small share of what an experienced and proficient administrator should know.

Initial licensure can only identify minimal standards. Moreover, knowledge in education continues to develop, and notions of effective practice evolve. For these reasons, administrators should be socialized to the understanding that learning about learning is a lifetime obligation. Nine states currently issue permanent licenses for the principalship, and six states issue permanent licenses for the superintendency. *Policy recommendation 7: States that offer permanent administrative licensure should revise licensure requirements so that licenses are valid for a specific term and renewal requires continuing professional development.*

As noted above, authority over licensure should remain with the states. In defining the knowledge base, however, states should share the responsibility with other relevant constituent groups and defer to understandings forged in other arenas. This mixture of state interest with the interests of other professional groups would seem to best serve all, including the individual practitioner. Common agreement on the knowledge base and an exam to test it are important steps toward making licensure in educational administration portable from state to state. Holding postsecondary preparation programs to a set of professional standards would ensure the quality of those programs without compromising opportunities for them to develop their unique manifestations and program vision.

EXPERIENCES REQUIRED FOR LICENSURE

Ideally, licensure as a school administrator should indicate more than just familiarity with minimal knowledge about the field. Citizens want assurance that state-licensed practitioners have skills that qualify them for their positions. These skills and abilities are best ascertained through school administration practice, not study of the field. States differ, however, in the experience requirements for initial and other levels of licensure. These variations in state requirements raise policy issues about the relationship between teaching experience and administrative licensure, the suitability of alternative licensure for school administrators, and requirements regarding clinical experience as part of administrative preparation and professional development programs.

As noted earlier, most states require teaching experience as a prerequisite to licensure as a building-level principal. Thirty-five states require teaching experience as a prerequisite to licensure as a school superintendent. These provisions recognize teaching and learning as the core technology of schools (Murphy, 1991b). Administrators must be intimately familiar with that technology in order to be effective and to establish credibility with colleagues and community. *Policy recommendation 8: Teaching experience should be required for licensure in school administration.*

Alternate licensure requirements for administrators are available in only 20 percent of the states and generally permit the substitution of managerial experience in professional fields other than education for teaching and administrative experience in education. This, too, raises an important policy issue. If schools are fundamentally places of teaching and learning, the substitution of managerial experience in other organizations may not be legitimate unless one can establish competence also in teaching and learning.

Alternative licensure programs that permit circumvention of the requirements for teaching experience are not warranted. As noted earlier, shortages of professionals licensed in school administration are limited to a few geographic locations. While school boards and school administrators may have doubts about the quality of licensed personnel available to fill certain positions, alternative licensure programs are inappropriate responses to concerns about quality. At the same time, we recognize that in large city schools, administrative personnel other than the superintendent are likely to have direct responsibility for the instructional program (e.g., assistant or associate superintendents for curriculum or elementary and secondary curriculum directors). *Policy recommendation 9: For superintendencies in large city schools, alternative certification should be limited to waiving the teaching experience requirement for candidates who can demonstrate extensive comparable experience in other organizations.* Decisions about alternative certification should be made by state licensing boards according to criteria set by such groups as the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1990).

An essential prerequisite to fully licensed status should be successful performance in an administrative position. We believe that additional graduate study is an appropriate requirement for full licensure. When the initial license can be obtained with a master's degree, graduate study alone should not be sufficient for full licensure. Currently, six states permit the upgrade of a principal's license on the basis of graduate study only, and four states permit the upgrade of the superintendent's license on the same basis. *Policy recommendation 10: States that permit full licensing of administrators on the sole basis of additional graduate credits should discontinue this practice and instead require evidence of successful experience for full licensure.*

If a license to practice is to represent more than minimal knowledge about a field, licensing should entail verification that the candidate possesses entry skills appropriate to the position. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration recommended that licensure include assessment of the candidate's communication skills as well as pedagogy, management, and leadership skills (1988, p. 22). Preparation programs should include substantial clinical components in field experiences and simulations (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989). As Murphy (1991a) noted, university faculties in educational leadership have increased the attention they give to the clinical components of graduate programs. Whether this increased attention is sufficient has yet to be established. Clinical components are expensive, and university financial commitments to programs in school administration have historically been limited. *Policy recommendation 11: Initial licensure should entail the establishment of minimal skill in administrative practice. This is best accomplished by deferring to preparation programs the obligation for documenting skill attainment through assessment centers, administrative portfolios, or clinical experience. Moreover, institutions for graduate study should be obligated to develop the clinical components of their programs in collaboration with school districts and other professional groups.* Several mechanisms for collaboration are available, and decisions about how to collaborate are best left to individual institutions.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Once permanent licensure is eliminated (see policy recommendation 7), all school administrators will assume the obligation for continued professional development. Moreover, school administrators should support this aspect of professionalism even in the absence of explicit state requirements.

One policy issue is the degree to which states should specify the particular professional development experiences that qualify candidates for license renewal. Greater state control can be obtained through greater specificity. Specificity also means, however, that license renewal requirements are more difficult to change, less responsive to individual needs

and concerns, and less responsive to changes in the knowledge base for administrative practice. Moreover, specificity is generally implemented through policy mandates and has adverse as well as desirable consequences. Mandates generally are written as minimum standards for compliance, not optimal or maximum requirements (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Hallinger & Murphy (1991) made a similar point in their discussion of professional development:

> State-mandated programs, regardless of quality, send a mixed message. On the one hand, mandated participation in professional development appears to signal the importance of professional growth. On the other hand, mandated growth ignores the individual needs of principals and models a process of development and change that runs counter to the role principals themselves must play in reshaping the culture of schools (p. 519).

Mandates have limited capacity to change behavior or attitudes.

Evaluation of recent efforts related to professional development is badly needed. Initiatives such as the LEAD program (funded at the federal level through the states), state mandates for administrative staff development, and school district initiatives have expanded the opportunities for in-service training for administrators during the past 10 years. Little evaluation of these programs has been done (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991). *Policy recommendation 12: States should develop broad guidelines for acceptable professional development that emphasize capacity-building rather than specify the precise nature and content of professional development.* Such policy should not be developed without reference to empirical assessments of the effectiveness of past efforts.

In professional development, tensions between professional autonomy and the compelling interests of the state are likely to be evident. We believe that the responsibility for defining and developing acceptable professional development should not rest solely or primarily with any one group. While individuals, school districts, state departments of education, state professional organizations, and universities all have legitimate interests in how professional development is defined, designed, and delivered, the benefits of vesting responsibility in any one group would be outweighed by the disadvantages. Costs of professional development should be shared among the groups with vested interests. States should bear a significant share of the expense, but so, too, should individuals, professional organizations, universities, and school districts. *Policy recommendation 13: One responsibility of a state licensing board should be to coordinate the shared responsibilities of groups with vested interests in the professional development of practicing administrators.*

REPRESENTATION

Licensure requirements are a poor mechanism to use in addressing the problem of representation. Just as it is important that the teaching profession be representative of gender, racial, and ethnic group diversity in the student population, it is important that school administrators reflect that diversity. We could not examine the relationships between licensure and representation given the available data. Numerous other reports and commissions, however, have noted this as a vital area of concern. *Policy recommendation 14: State and national initiatives regarding the licensure of school administrators should include inducements to encourage and support the inclusion of women and racial and ethnic minorities in the profession.*

CONCLUSION

Efforts to improve the practice of school administration through policy related to the licensure of school administrations raise a number of important issues. In general, the policy recommendations offered earlier as a platform for discussion recommend a crucial role for the states in licensure, accompanied by the delegation of responsibility to other agencies. State policy is more likely to be relevant, enlightened, and accepted if it is developed in conjunction with constituent groups. State policy must leave room for local initiatives and local vision and cannot be developed without attention to defensible claims about good administrative practice. Moreover, state policy should not be developed without reference to national standards and trends, including the requirements of national accrediting agencies.

Our recommendations include provisions for collaboration among groups with vested interest in the quality of school administrators. We envision a national policy board which will continue to define the knowledge base for the profession, develop an appropriate national examination, and explore a prestigious, but optional, national certification. We support state licensing boards that would cooperate with a national policy board and national accrediting agencies, give professionals a strong voice in the regulation of the field, and coordinate and define professional development opportunities. We recommend advisory groups to graduate programs in educational administration be established to ensure that those programs are linked to professionals in the field.

While we are aware of the difficulties of collaboration in all of these arenas, we believe that policy efforts isolated from professional organizations and preparation programs and based solely upon mandates for more stringent licensing requirements are doomed to failure. Professions must be improved from within. Policy based on collaboration, inducements, and capacity-building is an important part of the process.

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